

# Testimony

## Environmental Protection Agency National Agenda on the Environment and the Aging

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Good afternoon. It certainly is a pleasure to have the opportunity to testify before the EPA Panel today (and Secretary Christine Todd Whitman). I have been an admirer of Secretary Christine Todd Whitman's for a long time. First she impressed many as the New Jersey Governor, and then again I was very pleased that a former Governor, with a reputation of fairness and issue involvement, would be named to the key post at EPA. (I welcome you to Iowa Madam Secretary.)

I founded State Public Policy Group in 1984, after serving eight years in the Iowa Senate. After leaving, on my own accord, I might add, I formed this company with a basic mission to provide help individuals and constituencies be heard on relevant issues. Over the years, I, along with my 17 staff and colleagues, have worked hard to help disenfranchised persons in this state affect public policy. Although we have not worked a great deal on environmental issues, State Public Policy Group has worked closely with two of the today's co-sponsors – the University of Iowa College of Public Health and the Heritage Area Agency on Aging. We have, for many years, focused our attention on public health, persons with disabilities, Iowa's aging community, and rural and economic development.

You can certainly imagine my surprise when I heard the rumors about EPA's supposedly new rules that valued seniors at a discount rate. I could not imagine Secretary Christine Todd Whitman ever supporting regulations that might diminish the value of this country's senior citizens as a way to pro-rate their own agency's regulatory proposals to benefit the statistics in their currently considered air pollution plan. That sounds way too manipulative.

Following the Florida Listening Session, I was heartened to hear that Secretary Christine Todd Whitman unequivocally denied that the EPA was designing rules that would determine seniors of 70 years and older would be worth less for statistical purposes and discounted or valued at 63% of people like me – age 57. After all, I could not imagine that in the proposals and plans already pushed forward by the current administration, which allows increasing pollution, that the Secretary of EPA could include an even more noxious concept.

Incidentally, I have read with awe and amazement of policy changes those refineries, chemical plants, pulp mills, and power plants will be allowed to increase air emissions without installing adequate control technologies. As I understand it, 14 states have already filed suit in an effort to stop the EPA from continuing this policy change.

Well, the good news is that we have few refineries, chemical plants, pulp mills, and power plants in Iowa. But I will suggest that we do have lots of seniors. Per capita, we rank in the top three states of persons over the age of 65. We recently relinquished our number one ranking in the nation for frail elderly, those individuals over age 85. It is difficult to imagine Secretary Christine Todd Whitman would allow any of these policy and regulatory changes to advance.

This is a real "head scratcher." From my basic point of view, wouldn't it be more harmful for seniors if weaker environmental protections were enacted. I would suspect that some lives will be shortened, and certainly Iowa's seniors' lives will also be shortened. From a public health perspective, weaker protections and safeguards from pollution and emissions, we can expect more deaths as a result of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic lung disease.

SPPG, our company, just completed the Iowa Asthma Plan for CDC and the Iowa Department of Public Health. In 1999, asthma affected 200,000 Iowans. While 40,000 of those asthma sufferers were under age 18, more than 35,000 Iowa Seniors 65 and older suffered from asthma. Increased emissions from our power plants, as well as increased emissions that will come as a result of Clear Sky Proposals will not be helpful to those 35,000 Iowa Seniors. Certainly, I would like to think, though, that Christine Todd Whitman would understand the perils of these proposed policies.

I often have the opportunity to speak about the value of advocacy to various groups and organizations. I value the right to speak out and participate in a process. As I look at proposals like this, and look back at my life, on the front side of the baby boomer generation, I can only say to you, as I would say to any other public entity that infringes on the rights of individuals.

"I am 57 years old, and grew up and old at a time when active participation in issues was embraced and appreciated. It will not be too long until I am even more officially a 'senior.' I will have more disposable income, more disposable time, more relationships, and I will be your worst nightmare."

Iowa Seniors, all seniors, and the public have a responsibility to speak out. For the EPA to assume that during this time of war and economic havoc that it is the best time to "re-adjust" these regulations with the Clear Sky Proposal is truly unfortunate. I am so glad to know that Christine Todd Whitman was not supportive of any of these proposals and knew nothing about the senior discount regulations when it was posed in Florida. (Madam Secretary, I knew you would not let us down.) And for you who have been here listening. As a senior, yes I am, I would ask that you go beyond listening and work real hard to hear that Iowans will not stand for what appears to be a game of three-card Monte with your rules.

I certainly appreciated the opportunity to testify to you today. Please let Christine Todd Whitman know how we feel out here in Iowa.

Thank you.